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ABSTRACT

This description of the scope, legal deposit basis, preparation, and printing of the Singapore National Bibliography since its inception in 1967, provides insight into the searching tasks and editing processes involved in planning a retrospective bibliography, and proposes a chronologically inverted printing scheme for pre-1967 imprints, to be published at five year intervals until completed. First printed in 1969 for the 1967 imprints and issued annually, the bibliography since 1977 has been printed quarterly with annual cumulations. Retrospective issues of the bibliography for six historical periods between 1819 and 1966 are being considered for publication in reverse chronological order--e.g., v1: 1965-66, v2: 1959-64--until the last volume, 1819-68, allowing more time for a search of early imprints. Discussion of the issues of format, scope, and coverage includes choice of classification and cataloging schemes. Thirty-one references, a bibliography of 11 titles, and an appendix of available printings of the national bibliography are provided. (RAA)

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THE RETROSPECTIVE SINGAPORE NATIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHY
THE TASK AHEAD

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- THE TASK AHEAD

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Summary

This paper begins with a brief description of the compilation and printing of the Singapore national bibliography, from its inception in 1969 of 1967 imprints (its scope, its legal deposit basis, etc.) up to the present quarterly issues, thereby achieving currency and paving the way for the compilation of a retrospective national bibliography for the country to cover the imprints of 1819-1966.

Next it attempts to give an insight into the enormous task of the searching and editing processes involved in the planning of such a retrospective bibliography, and how this is complicated because legal depository laws dated from 1830's but became effective only in 1867 and a central local repository did not exist in the pre-war period. Different measures adopted by the National Library of Singapore to obtain the undeposited early national imprints and to fill the gaps in the existing Singapore collection of the Library are described and their problems highlighted.

The paper concludes by proposing the printing of the first volume of the retrospective bibliography in five years' time and provides some guidelines as to the method of its printing in a chronologically inverted way; its scope and coverage; and its arrangement.

Introduction

The National Library of Singapore, which functions both as a public library as well as a national library, undertakes the responsibility of producing the national bibliography for the country. From mid-1967 it began to plan for this publication. In June that year the Joint Standing Committee on Library Co-operation and Bibliographical Services of the former Persatuan Perpustakaan Singapura (now Library Association of Singapore) and the Persatuan Perpustakaan Malaysia met to consider and agree on the recommendations put forward for the compilation of a current national bibliography for each of the two countries.

Defined in these recommendations were the scope of each bibliography, its frequency, the arrangement and the method of reproduction. Categories of material agreed upon for inclusion were books and pamphlets on sale as well as those not on sale; government publications, for sale, free or for limited distribution; current serials on first appearance; maps and music. Frequency was to be annual at first and quarterly with annual cumulation at a later stage. The main section of the current national bibliography was to be in classified order, with author and title indexes; classification scheme initially Dewey decimal classification, 17th edition and cataloguing code the Anglo-American cataloguing rules, 1967.

In late 1967 a senior staff member of the National Library of Singapore was awarded a Unesco fellowship to study the production methods and the technical problems of the national bibliographies in India, Britain and the United States for the duration of six months beginning with January 1968. Upon his return he assumed the post of Editor, Singapore National Bibliography, and began work on the compilation of the first current national bibliography for the 1967 imprints.

The first annual volume of the Singapore national bibliography, covering material published in 1967, was brought out one and a half years later, in June 1969. It lists 784 items comprising full catalogue entries for books and pamphlets, which are for sale as well as those which are privately printed and freely distributed; government publications; current serials on first appearance; maps and music. Coverage is not comprehensive as material like theses and microforms are excluded. Items listed are material acquired through legal deposit provided for by the Printers and Publishers (Amendment) Act of 1967, defined as "an Act to regulate the printing and publication of papers and books, and to provide for the preservation of copies of books". Under this Act, which becomes the basis of acquisitions for the Singapore national bibliography, five copies of every book printed or published in Singapore are required to be automatically deposited in the National Library. Since then, annual issues covering imprints for 1968 to 1978 have been printed (see Appendix). Initially, due to manpower constraints, the annual compilations were delayed, e.g. the 1971 volume did not appear until late 1974. Gradually and to date currency was achieved and from 1977 onwards quarterly issues were produced.

Having accomplished the two basic functions of a national bibliographic agency, that is, (1) that of making full bibliographic records of items which are national imprints and (2) that of making available such records in a regularly printed national bibliography, the time has now come to give some thought and consideration to the enormous task of producing the retrospective national bibliography, a function which is considered an adjunct to the two primary ones.

Legal deposit provisions

Legal deposit regulations, if carefully drawn up, comprehensive in coverage and effectively enforced and observed, will make a very good

basis from which the national bibliography of a country, current or retrospective, can be compiled. In planning the Retrospective Singapore national bibliography, the period to be covered being from the founding of Singapore in 1819 to 1966, it is proposed to begin with a study of the provisions for legal deposit which existed or were in force in the country during that period.

Legal deposit laws were non-existent during the early period of Singapore's history. They came into being only with the appearance of the Liberty of Press Act no. 11 of 1835 and the Great Britain. Colonial Office. Colonial regulations, 1837-1957, which covered the Straits Settlements. Although legal deposit was provided for, in addition to instructions on colonial protocol, uniforms, and administrative procedures, it became effective only after the transfer of the Straits Settlements from the India Office rule to direct Colonial Office control in 1867. Such a regulation in force in 1867 and of particular relevance to this paper is Regulation 263 which provides for the transmission of two copies of the colonial book almanac, government gazette and "generally of such books or pamphlets issuing from the Colonial Press as may be useful to this Department i.e. the Colonial Office and of the principal newspapers published in the country". All official publications were also to be forwarded to the British Museum.

In 1886 another enactment, the Straits Settlements Book Registration Ordinance no. 15 of 1886, was passed whereby "the preservation of copies of books printed in the Colony and the registration of such books" were provided for. These legal deposit laws also provided for written records of what had been printed or published through the publication of a quarterly list of books published in the Government gazette, known as Memorandum of books registered in the Catalogue of books printed in the Straits Settlements (now the Republic of Singapore). Although this listing is purely by date of registration it contains a wealth of bibliographic

information on the national publishing output and can thus be considered the most convenient and comprehensive source from which the retrospective national bibliography for that period should begin. In addition the Colonial Secretary's Office was gazetted as the place at which books were to be delivered; but no local institution or library was appointed as the depository. Then in 1920 the Liberty of Press Act, 1835 and the Book Registration Ordinance, 1886 were repealed and consolidated by the Straits Settlements Printers and Publishers Ordinance, no.2 of 1920.

This act contained provision for, in addition to preservation, the regulating of printing and publication of papers and books. Mention may also be made here of the Straits Settlements Printing Presses Ordinance, no. 5 of 1920, as it provided for a newspaper register which should prove a good reference source for newspapers published in that period. In 1930, by gazette notification, printed Chinese books were to be delivered to the Protector of Chinese at his Singapore office.

No central repository existed also for public papers although the Singapore National Archives was put forward as one and has a good collection of published records for the Straits Settlements. Moreover, during World War II some archives were destroyed by the Japanese occupation government and in Singapore the Secretariat was looted. Because of the depredations of war and lack of a central repository the search for public records is greatly complicated. Source material for the history of the country is held not in the nation's centres of learning but in London, the capital city of the former colonial power. Overseas institutions, such as the India Office Library and the Colonial Office Library, are therefore the chief depositories of early official material, the former for material published prior to 1887 and the latter for all government publications throughout the period of colonial rule, 1867-1957. A third main source of early Singapore imprints is the British Museum, now the British Library. When the Straits Settlements came under colonial rule

the British Museum became the most important repository of Straits Settlements publications, receiving a copy of all published material and a copy of the quarterly lists which have appeared in the Government gazette since 1887.

Early printing and publishing in Singapore

Besides legal deposit provisions the history of early printing and publishing in Singapore may well provide information on what has been published and on important sources from which early national imprints, prior to the legislation of legal deposit laws, may be obtained. For this information Dr. Cecil K. Byrd's Early printing in the Straits Settlements, 1806-1858: a preliminary inquiry is invaluable. Early printing in Singapore, as stated in this work, began in 1822 on a press operated by the London Missionary Society. The Mission Press, which was stationed here until 1846 when the whole press was shifted to China, also made possible the publication of the first periodical, the Singapore chronicle, in 1824. Besides printing for the government and the commercial community its activities were also concentrated on the printing of Malay books and tracts. The year 1834 saw the establishment of another missionary station in Singapore, this time the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. This resulted in the printing of more tracts and scriptures in Malay and Chinese for the next nine years before the station closed down and its printing establishment was handed over to the London Missionary Society. Following this, during the next 15 years several Chinese and English newspapers were printed, viz : two Chinese weeklies - Tifang jih pao (Local news), 1845, and Jit sheng (Rising sun), 1858, and four English language newspapers - Straits messenger (1842-43), Singapore local reporter (1852-53), Straits guardian (1854) and Shipping gazette (1858). Unfortunately none of these English papers seemed to have been preserved in any local repository in Singapore and Malaysia.

Large scale publishing resulted only after World War II, with the bulk of the publishing activity, estimated at 80%, confined to textbooks for primary and secondary schools in Singapore and elsewhere. Publishing activity by large companies for their employees and their shareholders, in the form of annual and directors' reports and information brochures, and by diplomatic missions of foreign governments in Singapore, also resulted in a large amount of literature of cultural or commercial nature, written normally in English, with some translated and printed in Chinese. Tamil publications were largely confined to journals. These printers and publishers would have to be approached for those publications which might have escaped depository regulations or were not deposited at all.

Problems in identifying and acquiring undeposited or "missed" items for the retrospective national bibliography are amplified by the publishing for a multi-lingual society. "Missed" items are the result of loopholes in the legal deposit acts. These gaps are inevitable depending on how effectively the laws are enforced and how complete their coverage is. Since the acts neither covered the whole period under review, i.e. 1819-1966 nor did they cover all forms of material (e.g. non-book material is excluded), the resulting gaps of undeposited items make it necessary and desirable to explore all likely sources of early national imprints in order to make the listing in the proposed retrospective national bibliography as complete and comprehensive as possible. The following section reports on the different sources searched, or to be searched, and the various measures taken to locate and acquire the wanted items, through purchase, donation or loan, for listing in this retrospective bibliography.

The search for and the acquisition of wanted items

Armed with information on the relevant source material for early Singapore imprints, culled from the above studies, we now proceed to examine the searches that should be made or are being made by the National Library of Singapore, and the various methods used in reaching out to prospective suppliers.

The main catalogues of British libraries, such as the General catalogue of printed books of the British Museum, the Catalogue of the India Office Library and the Catalogue of the Colonial Office Library, were among the first to be searched since they are the chief sources for Singapore books published during the colonial period. Entries under the headings "Straits Settlements" and "Singapore" are being scanned and those with Singapore imprints are noted and checked against the holdings of the National Library of Singapore. Microfilm copies of items which are not held by the Library would then be acquired from the British Library. In this same way, the periodicals listings in the British Museum catalogue are also being searched for missed out titles and missing issues to fill the gaps in the Library's Singapore journals and newspaper collection.

General and subject bibliographies on Asia, Southeast Asia, Malaysia and Singapore, and bibliographical references given in books on these regions should be and are being checked. These include checklists and subject catalogues of libraries, e.g. the Southeast Asia catalog of the Cornell University Libraries, the Southeast Asia subject catalog of the Library of Congress, the Checklist of Southeast Asian serials and the Accessions list of the Yale University's Southeast Asian collection. Two interesting examples which list very early national imprints are W.H. Medhurst's China, (London, 1838) and Memorials of Protestant missionaries to the Chinese: giving a list of their publications, (Shanghai, 1867). The former publication contains a list of books written in the English or Malay language and printed in Singapore between 1824 and 1833 while the latter provides some fifty odd titles originating from Singapore. Once identified, the items were further checked for availability from the catalogues of the British Museum and the London School of Oriental and African Studies Library as the Library houses the former London Missionary Society Library's collection. To date the National Library has succeeded in acquiring a good number of microfilm copies in this manner. Other

libraries which must also be mentioned here are those of Cornell, Harvard and Yale Universities, from which photocopies of some early Chinese titles or microfilm copies of missing issues in the National Library's local newspaper collection have been purchased.

Other publications, such as, Beda Lim's Malaya, Cheeseman's Bibliography of Malaya, and Guide to Western manuscripts and documents in the British Isles relating to South and South East Asia, by M.D. Wainwright are worthy of note, also, P. Lim's Newspapers published in the Malaysian area (now being revised) and A. Teeuw's A critical survey of studies on Malay and bahasa Indonesia which provided titles for old newspapers and Malay language publications respectively. For titles in the Tamil script, the Tamil Malaysiana was searched and microfilm copies of wanted items purchased from the University of Malaya Library.

The resources of overseas second-hand bookdealers were next explored. From 1977 letters were sent to selected firms located in Europe, the United Kingdom and the United States, informing them of the Library's intention to compile a retrospective national bibliography of all books and other published and printed material published in Singapore, from 1819-1966. The letters sought the co-operation and assistance of these booksellers in providing information on any of these publications which the Library would be willing to obtain by means of purchase, donation or loan for microfilming. The following types of material, in English or any other languages, were mentioned:

- a) Books, including textbooks, children's books, guide books
- b) Periodicals and journals
- c) Pamphlets
- d) Government publications
- e) Society publications, including souvenir publications
- f) Privately printed publications.

Reference was also made to the publications of pre-war publishers like Peter Chong, Malaya Publishing House, and Kelly and Walsh, which would not have deposited all their publications with the former Raffles Library. To date some responses or replies to this appeal have been received, e.g. a Canadian bookdealer offered for sale an 1829 Malay religious tract and an 1852 edition of A vocabulary of the English and Malay languages, by B.P. Keasberry was purchased. Quite often too such titles were identified from rare book dealers' catalogues and purchases made, usually at considerably high prices.

The media of the press as a means of reaching out to the individual collectors was next considered. A "Wanted" advertisement requesting the "sale, donation, or loan for microfilming, of books and journals published in Singapore between 1819 and 1945" was inserted in both the English and Chinese language newspapers in Singapore. A few members of the public responded to this by offering for sale some old school textbooks and a good number of old books and magazines written in the Chinese script.

Other means employed, and with some measure of success, include personal visits to and contacts with local bookshops, organisations and societies, established school libraries with pre-war collections, and individuals. A number of old school textbooks written mainly in the Chinese script and some Chinese publications published in nineteenth and early twentieth-century Singapore were purchased after visiting certain Chinese bookshops. A look into the pre-war collection of the library of the Chinese High School and appeals to the Malaysia Publishing House and the Raffles Hotel yielded some important early Singapore titles. More organisations such as associations and societies will be contacted in like manner for their in-house publications. Some very valuable early imprints in the Chinese script were also obtained with the making of microfilm copies from books lent from the private collection of Professor Hsü Yün-chiao. It is known that several individual collectors are willing

to offer for sale to the National Library their collections of Singapore titles but the Library is unable to acquire any of these by this means because the price is prohibitive. However, two invaluable private collections, the Tan Yeok Seong and the Gibson-Hill Collections, have been donated to the Library in the early 1960's.

Early Singapore books and serials are acquired by other libraries within the country besides the National Library. The holdings of these libraries would have to be examined with the co-operation of these institutions.

Beginning with the largest library - the University of Singapore Library - the record of its holdings, the Catalogue of the Singapore/Malaysia collection, and the Supplement, 1968-1972, is being examined. Listed are some 7,500 items and 3,100 items respectively, comprising imprint dates from the founding of modern Singapore through colonial government of independence and after. It, however, excludes Chinese titles. The microfilm holdings listed would be of particular relevance here for they contain records of documents acquired from the India Office Library, the Colonial Office Library and Indian National Archives, e.g. the Straits Settlements Labour Department reports, the Annual reports of the Chinese Protectorate, 1887-1893 and the Straits Settlements factory records. The recent acquisitions listed in its Accessions list are also scanned for national imprints not already acquired by the National Library.

The Nanyang University Library has a very good collection of local creative Chinese writing and a bibliography of this collection, published in 1976 entitled, The Exhibition bibliography of local Chinese creative writing, has been checked. Similarly wanted national imprint titles may be obtained from an examination of other publications of the University - its Accessions lists, its printed bibliographies and catalogues and its Bulletin - and the accessions lists of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Every effort should be made to search all bibliographies and references compiled, published or unpublished, on Southeast Asia in general and Singapore and Malaysia in particular. Several listings are being scanned at the moment and three such examples of note are the Masterlist of Southeast Asian microforms, edited by Winarti Partaningrat, Singapore, 1978, which contains some 4,600 cards of Singapore/Malaysia items, the Periodicals for Southeast Asian studies: a union catalogue of holdings in British and selected European libraries, and the Southeast Asia periodicals: an international list, compiled by G. Raymond Nunn.

The method of compiling the retrospective national bibliography

Unlike countries which are fortunate in having preserved much of their publishing, and their task of cataloguing thus made comparatively inexpensive, Singapore would have to contend with much higher production costs. The manpower cost spent on necessary searching of the many varied and widespread sources and the high prices usually demanded for many of the located "rarebook" items will add on to the cataloguing and printing cost. A single volume to cover the whole period under review, 1819-1966, would be costly and even more difficult to bring out. Moreover, publication date would have to be pushed back even later, depending on how slow or how fast the searches on all likely sources could be completed. It is therefore proposed that this bibliography be brought out in several volumes and at different times.

The entire period 1819-1966 could perhaps be divided into broad historical periods of the country and the retrospective national bibliography scheduled according to this breakdown:

- 1819-1868 : Under British rule, as part of British India
- 1869-1941 : As part of the Straits Settlements
- 1942-1945 : Under the Japanese Occupation
- 1946-1958 : As a separate crown colony
- 1959-1964 : Self-government
- 1965-1966 : Independence

Since material for the later period is relatively easier to obtain and more readily available because of the existence of legal deposit laws, as seen earlier on, it is also proposed that we attempt to publish the volumes in chronologically inverted order, i.e. v.1: 1965-1966; v. 2: 1959-1964, and so on until the last volume, v.6: 1819-1868. This process would allow more time for a thorough search for the very early imprints and help to ensure a more complete and comprehensive coverage, thus increasing the usefulness of the Bibliography.

Format, scope, coverage, etc. of the Bibliography

Should the proposed Retrospective Singapore national bibliography be only a enumerative listing of titles published or should it give full bibliographic details for each item listed? Should the arrangement of the text be alphabetical, chronological or classified? What should be its scope? - to cover the national imprints or the national collection (i.e. material outside the national imprints which has relevance to Singapore, its writers and its languages). What types of material are to be included? These are but some of the points to consider and agree on now prior to the compilation of the Bibliography proper.

If urgency in publication is the deciding factor a simple and quick enumerative bibliography would seem the answer. However, as this retrospective bibliography is desirable but not urgent, a descriptive bibliography should be advocated as this would undoubtedly shed more light on our publishing and bibliographic history. Also, full descriptive cataloguing is already practised for all our Singapore titles. As regards arrangement, an alphabetical order of the main section, with chronological listing for works by the same author, should be preferred to a classified sequence as for a current national bibliography. This is so because a retrospective national bibliography serves more as a reference tool rather than one for book selection and acquisition.

Is the Bibliography to contain only titles published in Singapore or should it include all material published about or on Singapore? Two arguments could be put forth against the inclusion of the latter category: (a) It is against the basic concept of the Universal Bibliographical Control of providing "the definitive record produced once in the country of origin of the publication", and (b) It would increase the problems of searching and locating items for listing in the Bibliography. It would perhaps be best to leave the listing of these titles to subject bibliographers.

Comprehensive listing is one of the main aims of the national bibliographers and one which is "a difficult ideal and which no country is likely to achieve fully".* The National Library of Singapore should attempt to strive towards such comprehensive coverage for its retrospective national bibliography so as to enhance its usefulness as a reference too. This would result if a systematic checking is adopted at all times until all possible sources have been exhausted. All book and non-book material - monographs; periodicals and newspapers; government publications; maps; pictures; photographs; music scores; theses; private manuscripts; films; tapes etc. - should be given consideration.

Last but not least, it should be mentioned that standard cataloguing code and classification scheme be used, i.e. the Anglo-American cataloguing rules and the Dewey decimal classification, latest editions.

Conclusion

One of the major features of the growth of library services around the world is the development of national bibliographies. Singapore produces a current national bibliography and this service is further consolidated and improved on by its participation in the ISDS network and the ISBN project.

* Kenny, J. Union catalogues (In International library review. 7(2): 227-234, Apr.75)

Although it is desirable to follow this up with the compilation of a retrospective national bibliography there are a few tasks which need to be attended to first. Despite the relatively small volume of Singapore publishing and the existence of legal deposit regulations the problems of undeposited and "missed" material still exist and need attention. Secondly, there is the problem of coverage as theses, microforms and audio-visual material are not covered by the laws. But although theses are not included in the current national bibliography they have not gone unrecorded altogether as the University of Singapore has provided regular listings, such as Publications and theses, and Dissertations, theses and academic exercises submitted to the University of Singapore and deposited in the University of Singapore Library, 1947-1976. Proposals have been made for the legal deposit laws to be revised for a more comprehensive coverage and the scope of the current national bibliography correspondingly widened and bibliographical control made more complete. The cataloguing staff of the National Library are also concentrating on the conversion of the Library's catalogue into a machine readable file. It is envisaged that a database of national imprints would be generated from the proposed 'SINGMARC' in say, five years' time, if not earlier. By then the computer could take over the production of the Bibliography. Meanwhile the process of searching and watching out for, and securing variant or unrecorded national imprints, will and should continue and the items entered into the database until all possible sources have been exhausted. This process, though tedious and time-consuming, is well worthwhile, considering the benefits to be derived from the Retrospective Singapore national bibliography's complete and comprehensive listing.

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Singapore National Bibliography

<u>Year of imprint</u>	<u>Publication Date</u>
1967	May 1969
1968	January 1970
1969	September 1970
1970	August 1972
1971	July 1974
1972	May 1975
1973	October 1975
1974	April 1976
1975	November 1976
1976	August 1977
*1977	November 1978
*1978	November 1979
*1979	In progress
*1980	-

Beginning with 1977 quarterly issues with annual cumulation are published.